

MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
JUNE 6, 2002

Chair William O’Gara called the Fire Commission to order at 1:01PM at the Maine Emergency Medical Services conference room, 156 Edison Drive, Augusta, Maine. Members present were Michael Albert, Jack Berry, Jay Bradshaw, John Cannon, John Dean, Rep. Robert Duplessie, Chief Darrel Fournier, Al Godfrey, Jeff Maker, Harty Norris, Sen. William O’Gara, Dave Wacker, Steve Willis, and Rep. Thomas Bull. Members excused were Chief Jeff Cammack, Ted Johnston, Randy Keep, Chief Jethro Pease, Rep. Michael Quint, Sen. Christine Savage and Bill Williams. Guests of the Fire Commission attending the meeting were Rep. Peter Rines-Wiscasset; Earle Welch, Jr., Assistant Fire Chief, Wayne Fire Department; Leslie Wiles, Maine Forest Service; and Dan Arms, Maine Fire Training and Education.

Chair O’Gara welcomed new member Rep. Thomas Bull to the Fire Commission.

Secretary Godfrey distributed a “thinking of you” card to members for their signatures and spoke briefly on the recent illness of Randy Keep. “Randy is an important part of this Commission” said Chair O’Gara and asked that members send their thoughts and prayers to him.

Vice Chair Darrel Fournier made a motion, seconded by Secretary Godfrey, to accept the minutes of May 6, 2002. The minutes were unanimously accepted as amended. The minutes will be corrected on page 1, under Old Business, paragraph 3, line 9 to read Commission’s, not Commissioner’s, endorsement.

OLD BUSINESS

The Training Facilities subcommittee updated the Fire Commission on their progress and circulated a draft of the proposed survey form for input and suggestions from Fire Commission members. The subcommittee discussed the purpose and goals of the survey. Survey questions will ask about the types, locations and frequency of firefighter and EMS training around the state. The information and numbers will be collected and brought back to the Fire Commission. The subcommittee plans to send a two-page survey, cover letter and self addressed stamped envelope within the next two weeks. In August, the subcommittee will start looking at the results from the survey and make any necessary follow up calls.

Members discussed the June 11 referendum, specifically Question 1 (dorm sprinklers). A draft of the press release and information packet were distributed. Members made changes regarding facts and figures, clarified language and agreed to send a positive educational message. A final version will be drafted to reflect the Fire Commission’s recommendations.

A motion by Vice Chair Darrel Fournier, seconded by Jack Berry, to accept the reworked press release. The motion passed unanimously.

Four press conferences are scheduled in Gardiner, Bangor, Portland and Presque Isle. The first will be on June 5, 2002. Representatives from the Fire Commission, Maine

Fire Chiefs, Maine Educational System and other interested organizations will be present. Fire Commission members discussed an Orono Fire Department video illustrating the burning of two dorm rooms-one with and one without sprinklers. Members discussed showing the video at the press conferences, distributing it to various media outlets and the costs to the Fire Commission to reproduce the video.

A motion by John Cannon, seconded by Jack Berry, to authorize the expenditure of a nominal fee necessary to reproduce copies of the Orono Fire Department video. The motion passes unanimously.

Members discussed the Fire Commission's website and the Maine Fire Chiefs difficulty in attempting to link to the Fire Commission's site. Members agreed it was a great idea and will make the necessary arrangements to provide the link.

Discussion then moved to the plans for The Maine Fire Protection Services Day in January 2003. Members suggested that the Fire Commission's report be reprinted and distributed to the new 121st Legislature. Other suggestions were to combine the Fire Commission's 2002 and 2003 reports. Members agreed that a luncheon would be provided either in the Hall of Flags or the Legislative Council Chambers. Pros and cons about each location were discussed. Members had many suggestions for displays-geographical, videos, participatory. Members also agreed that as part of the festivities, firefighters would post the colors in the House and Senate Chambers and that a fire service chaplain would lead the Morning Prayer. A Fire Service Day subcommittee was formed to begin work. Members include Chair Bill O'Gara, Vice Chair Darrel Fournier, Jack Berry and Rep. Tom Bull.

Members agreed to extend the contract with Penflex, Inc. for the recruitment and retention contract. A follow up survey was sent to fifty fire departments and additional time is needed to compile the data received from that survey. No additional money will be required. The contract negotiations with Milliman USA for the health care study have been less successful. Repeated attempts to contact their representative have been unsuccessful. The Fire Commission does not have a signed contract with Milliman USA.

NEW BUSINESS

Fire Commission members discussed the successes of youth programs across the state and the need for basic firefighter programs for high school students at the 27-29 vocational schools in Maine. A successful program in the Oxford area has been expanded to six additional programs next year. Members discussed the need to encourage firefighter recruitment and retention and expand these opportunities to young people in Maine. Suggestions included writing a letter endorsing and supporting youth programs that would be sent to each district, working with local fire departments and providing a possible display at the Maine Fire Protection Services Day in January 2003. Members also discussed the issue of "young people in the field" and the interpretation of Maine law. Members were also encouraged to proceed with caution- youth programs are wonderful ideas and we need programs we can fully support, but proceeding too quickly may lead to an accident no one wants to see.

The Portland Fire Department will be hosting a physical testing program the week of July 22nd. Orientation sessions, pretesting the equipment and ways to prepare prior to the tests will also be planned. The event will occur all day at a local Portland elementary

school. On “media day” local reporters and area fitness professionals will be invited to try the equipment. Members suggested two or three of the tests be reconstructed at the January 2003 Maine Fire Service Recognition Day.

Members discussed that the Fire Commission start a “Best Practice” award. The first suggested recipient was the Portland Fire Department for offering the physical testing program. Members agreed that a “Best Practice” award was a wonderful idea to recognize accomplishments of firefighters across the state and that the award be posted on the Fire Commission’s website. Other suggestions included offering certificates with the state seal and letters of recognition from the Fire Commission. Members will explore other ideas for the August meeting.

Members briefly discussed the impact of the budget shortfall on the State Fire Marshal’s Office and Maine Emergency Medical Service’s budgets. The situation is described as “very bleak” for 2003 and it will be very challenging to receive money from General Fund sources. This issue will be discussed in greater detail at the August meeting.

The next two meetings of the Fire Commission are scheduled for Monday, August 5, 2002 and September 9, 2002 at 1:00pm at the Maine Emergency Medical Services Building.

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, the meeting adjourned at 2:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Pinette
Staff